

Republican Congressman Jerry Weller attempted to use a last-minute amendment on a federal surface transportation bill late Tuesday to steal control of the proposed Abraham Lincoln National Airport plan endorsed by Congressman Jackson and Governor Blagojevich.

"This is a desperate midnight attempt to steal control of the airport -- taking control away from those who have worked hard to build it, and giving control to those who want to stop it," said Congressman Jackson, who's spearheaded efforts to build the airport for the past 10 years.

Jackson noted that Governor Blagojevich endorsed the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission (ALNAC) plan and in April sent it to the FAA for final approval. In its submission to the FAA, the State called ALNAC a duly-constituted commission composed of 32 communities and said **ALNAC "submitted a comprehensive alternative airport concept (that) offers the flexibility to provide for optimum land utilization, maximize cost-efficiencies and create better long-term planning** " for the inaugural and ultimate airport plans.

On the other hand, the State noted **Will County "has not proposed specific concepts for the ultimate or inaugural airport** ." (See attached pages of the IDOT's final draft of the "Concepts Alternatives Analysis.")

Weller's proposed amendment -- which he tried to tack on the massive Transportation Equity Act which funds federal road and mass transit projects -- would set national precedent by mandating that any local airport commission working to build a new airport in Chicago's south suburbs be "composed of a majority of local residents" from Will County. (See attached draft language.)

"In short, Weller proposed taking ALNAC's plan and giving it to those who did not submit one.

This attempted hijacking of the airport is appalling, unprecedented and unprincipled, and it threatens the private developers' interest in the project. I vigorously oppose it," Jackson said. "This would open the door for the federal government to meddle in any local airport authority."

Weller's amendment -- which was killed in a conference committee -- also would require the State and any local airport commission to retroactively comply with the "Federal Procurement Policy Act" regarding land procurement and the selection of a developer. "That is nothing short of theft of services and if this weren't Congress, it would be a crime," Jackson said.